

Thomas J. Driscoll
590 Depot Street
Harwich, MA 02645

October 7, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
445 12th Street SW, TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: CG Docket # 02-311- Biennial Review 2002

Regarding the above-mentioned docket, I, being deeply involved - voluntarily as well as through fate of hearing loss, implore you to keep the standards set high (or higher) than presently set. The FCC must not allow any weakening, dilution, or repeal of ANY rules, regulations, guidelines or standards related to access to the telecommunications network for persons with disabilities. As a daily telecommunications network (hereinafter referred to as the "Network") user who is deaf, I use specialized equipment (courtesy of FCC's clout) and the telecommunications relay service ("TRS") in order to access the Network. It is absurd that the FCC would entertain the thought of revising or repealing these critical rules. I fear big business will walk willy-nilly over the access issue if unleashed to do so. Fully understanding that this is a procedural review, I nevertheless abhor the thought of backtracking when the USA can be proud of the level of access provided to the citizenship as equally as possible.

In regards to the complaint mechanism, it is an invaluable tool for the your branch of the government to access not only complaints but comments that have bring to light issues, new technology, and potential improvements of equipment and services related to accessing the Network. This allows the typical user as well as a corporate attorney for file comments from an even platform.

As stated previously, my very livelihood does – and , God forbid, life may – depend on access to the Network. Customer premises equipment must keep up with not only the needs of the populace but technology as well. The marketplace cannot drive this issue and, historically, manufacturers will not respond sufficiently. Users with disabilities are a minority in the eyes of corporate America. Unless the FCC remains strong and increases influence on research and development, resolving the many loopholes that keep me from communicating on a TRULY equal basis will be impossible.

Voicemail is the scourge of the modern times... Having said that, it is the scourge multiplied exponentially for users of adaptive telecommunications equipment and the TRS. Much needs to be done to address the huge disparity between my wife (who is hearing) placing a call, encountering voicemail, and leaving a message, and I trying to do the same via the TRS or directly through a TTY and taking five to ten times longer (a.k.a. TDD – Telecommunications Device for the Deaf).

Part 68 – Connection of Terminal Equipment to the Telephone Network is – I fear – prone to collapse if not strengthened. Daily the common carriers, and telecom providers are pulling their phones from public places. This effectively isolates me, when I am away from my home or office, from using that Network without expensive wireless devices. Speaking of wireless, there is PLENTY of money in this still-new technology. The manufacturers should have no qualms about making their products functionally equivalent.

In closing, I cannot afford to lose any of the hard won achievements that the FCC has marshaled for disability related telecommunications/technology regulations. They are needed to protect consumer rights and opportunity to access our telecommunications network.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Driscoll